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# **Ethnic Tatars in contention for recognition and autonomy: bilingualism and pluri-cultural education policies in Tatarstan**

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## **Abstract**

© 2016 Association for the Study of Nationalities. This article explores the development of language and education policies in the Republic of Tatarstan, a constituent of the Russian Federation, in the context of continued decline in minorities' political nationalism between 2000 and the 2010s. The new "model of Tatarstan" relies on a close partnership with Moscow reaffirmed by an exclusive treaty on the division of powers. However, this formality does not eliminate Tatars' cultural contention for recognition and autonomy. The case of Tatarstan speaks to both the potential and the constraints of autonomous territories that are incapable of satisfying the needs of co-nationals living beyond their administrative borders. Language policies and education practices have become a relatively autonomous area for claim-making in defense of Tatar culture as well as bilingualism and multicultural education in the region. This study reveals the interrelationship between the two components, Tatar ethno-culturalism and "pluri-culturalism," and the encouragement of the region's diversity in the public domain of Tatarstan. Valuable in itself, the latter in a wider context appears to be a necessary condition for protecting minority groups in multinational Russia. Thus while promoting the interests of the "titular" nationality – ethnic Tatars – Tatarstan also serves the advancement of multicultural values in present-day Russia.

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## **Keywords**

multicultural education, national minorities, Russian Federation, Tatar language, Tatarstan republic